

***Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park
Federal Advisory Commission Meeting***

December 19, 2013

Middletown Town Hall
7875 Church Street
Middletown, Virginia

- 1) General Introductions
Patrick Farris
- 2) Adoption of Minutes
Patrick Farris
- 3) Update—Status of FAC Members/Nomination Process
Jim Northup
- 4) Update—Impacts of Government Shutdown/FY 2014 Budget
Jim Northup
- 5) Update—New Park Brochure
Amy Bracewell
- 6) Update—Highway Directional Signs
Amy Bracewell
- 7) Update—Report on Visitor Contact Station and Bookstore
Amy Bracewell
- 8) Update—Shared Graphic Identity
Amy Bracewell
- 9) Update—Planning/Development of Park Trails
Amy Bracewell
- 10) Update—U.S. 11 Bridge Project
Amy Bracewell
- 11) 150th Anniversary Planning
Amy Bracewell and Patrick Farris
- 12) I-81 Bridge Replacement
Amy Bracewell

13) Planning for Future Land Protection
Amy Bracewell

Meeting Notes

Commission members in attendance: Jim Northup, Designated Federal Official (DFO); John Adamson, Belle Grove, Inc.; Carl Bernhards, Middletown; Amy Bracewell, NPS; Katie Donahue, USFS; Patrick Farris, Warren County and chair; Eric Lawrence, Frederick County; Rob Nieweg, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Richard Redmon, Strasburg; and Pam Sheets, Shenandoah County.

Commission members absent: Jeanne Frink, Commonwealth of Virginia; Stanley M. Hirschberg, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation (CCBF); and Nicholas Picerno, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF).

Others in attendance: Matt Armstrong, *Winchester Star*; Bob Grogg, NPS volunteer; Kristen Laise, Belle Grove, Inc.; Dave Stegmaier, District Office, U.S. Representative Frank Wolf.

Chair Patrick Farris opened the meeting at 8:31 a.m. Farris asked that everyone present give their name and affiliation.

The meeting notes from September 19, 2013, were approved with one abstention.

Jim Northup said that he was sorry to see that Representative Frank Wolf would not be running for reelection, and mentioned that he knew the Commission would want to know about any farewell commemorations. Dave Stegmaier responded that the Congressman still has a year on the job, and that we would be hearing from him.

Jim Northup reviewed the status of the commission members' appointments: Jeanne Frink's term expires March 2014. Rick Redmond's term expires June 2015. Northup needs Carl Bernhard's resume to complete his renomination package. Eric Lawrence's renomination has been submitted. Pam Sheets has been reappointed to a second term. Patrick Farris's term has expired, and Warren county is considering a candidate. David Blount and Thomas Kelley have expressed interest in the private landowner slot. A person to represent a citizens' interest group is needed. Renomination packages have been submitted for John Adamson, Stan Hirschberg, Rob Nieweg, and Nick Picerno. Amy Bracewell and Katie Donahue have been approved for the ex-officio positions.

The government shutdown was a disaster for the parks and the communities near them in work time lost, decline in productivity, and lost revenues. Shenandoah National Park lost 2,000 workdays and \$400-500,000 in entrance fees. The park's concessioner lost approximately \$2.4 million in lost revenues. The silver lining was that Amy Bracewell and Eric Campbell had made good preparations and the partners stepped into the breach.

Nevertheless there was much confusion, and with the NPS website not working, many people could not get basic information. The parks are looking at a 3 percent cut in revenues for FY 2014.

Amy thanked everyone for their comments on the current version of the park brochure. She is working with HFC to address comments and develop solutions that will address the long-term needs of the publication. The project remains on schedule for delivery in the park in June 2014.

The highway directional sign program was adversely affected by the shutdown, namely in bringing the contracting process to a halt temporarily, but the end of the project is in sight. If moneys are received, payment can be made to the contractor, and installation will hopefully be in March or April. The signs on I-66 have been rejected by the regional engineer, so the next step is to appeal that decision to the Richmond headquarters.

The visitor contact station is now observing winter hours, open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Only Shannon and Eric will be working there; the volunteers will come back in April. Visitation this first season was 2,056. In this first five months of operations the retail outlet took in \$2,300.

Bracewell is now preparing the Scope of Work for the shared graphic identity request for proposal; it will be released in January. Once the award has been made she will report of the progress of the effort.

The project to develop park trails got off the ground with a charette, June 26. It was followed by a walk-through August 26 and a second one December 11 once the leaves were off the trees. The NPS and Belle Grove met with private landowners to discuss concerns and answer questions that they have about trails. The group has focused on four possible trails: the Vermont Monument trail, the Trench trail, Thoburn trail, and Belle Grove to the Heater House trail. A number of concerns have arisen: keeping trail users and cattle apart, liability issues, trespassing at Panther Cave, security issues and policies relating to security, and establishing a priority for construction of the trails. The trail crew foreman from Shenandoah will lay out the Vermont Monument trail with the goal of having it in use by next season. Also a trails document needs to be prepared; it will be created with the assistance of Ursula Lemanski of the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program.

VDOT has rejected the U.S. 11 bridge alignment recommendation made by the NPS and the Commission. VDOT will be holding public meetings in the area December 13, 2013, through February 14, 2014. Many commissioners questioned why VDOT seemed not to want to respond to the suggestions prepared by the NPS and the Federal Advisory Commission. Northup said that to have an effective discussion with VDOT, he would need specifics on why the plan was flawed. Adamson said that the Commission must be clear in what it wanted, pointing to aspects that were not acceptable and to also to those that were compelling. Northup said that he would draft a letter based on today's

conversation and ask Commission members to comment and provide substantive additions to the document before sending it.

Bracewell and Farris reported that planning for the 150th anniversary commemorations is proceeding. A number of different speakers have been proposed: Governor Terry McAuliffe, Congressman Frank Wolf, NPS Director Jon Jarvis. They hope that there can be a lecture series in August. Farris also reported the Virginia Civil War 150 HistoryMobile will visit the Lord Fairfax Community College campus, February 19–22, 2014. The group is working to encourage participation and to identify marketing opportunities.

Bracewell reported that she had received an email and a phone call from Joshua Gutshall of VDOT on November 16. The agency is planning to replace the northbound bridge on I-81 over Cedar Creek. The bridge will also be widened and will extend VDOT's right-of-way 20 additional feet into land owned by Belle Grove and SVBF. This work will be advertised in January 2017. SVBF has informed VDOT that its land is protected by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

The park will be meeting with the Civil War Trust and partners in December to discuss land protection priorities and to draw up a prioritized list of land acquisition opportunities. Preservation is an issue for all partners, and it is critical for the park. Everyone needs to think about the long term, including the talked-of expansion of I-81 as well as any other preservation issue. This is the time for a careful and thoughtful discussion and planning. All ideas will be reported to the Commission.

In the final minutes of the meeting the discussion returned to VDOT and its rejection of the NPS/FAC suggestions on the U.S. 11 bridge. After hashing over the ideas and thoughts, the Commission drafted a motion: The Federal Advisory Commission advises the NPS to pursue taking the decision of the Staunton Regional Office to the next higher level and to stress the nature of a road project through a national park." The motion was approved by all members with one abstention.

The next meeting will be at the Warren County Government Center, March 20, 2014 at 8:30 a.m.

The election of officers will take place at the March meeting.

Patrick Farris adjourned the meeting at 10:10 a.m.